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13 August 1973

Dear Andy,

Let me try to recount the life and death of the Soviet Forum.

Most of the story is told in the attached table. The Forum started off at a healthy pace but faded quickly. We had no articles for it in the sixth week. The seventh issue had two articles and one rejoinder. The eighth had two articles, but one of these was a reprint from [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The ninth issue consisted solely of a book review by a Soviet author. I found this trend so discouraging, and the ninth issue so embarrassing, that I ventilated the problem with Bill Hyland and performed euthanasia.

The Forum had two main purposes. One was to provide an outlet for longer, more thoughtful and complex articles than were the norm in the daily Soviet Developments. The other was to allow for rejoinders which would bring to light useful differences of opinion. The difficulties with the first objective were paramount, but there were also problems with the second.

Why did the contributions peter out? In particular, why did this happen during what was actually a very stirring time--US mining of Haiphong and Soviet acceptance of the President in Moscow? I think the main reason is that the Forum---and Developments---were laid on the analysts in addition to all their other duties. They were not relieved of anything else in order to make time for this effort. In addition, the initial feedback from the NSC Staff was much more positive about the Developments than about the Forum. When the pre-summit pressures got really heavy, and all concerned were tasked with a spate of unilateral papers, the Developments survived but the Forum starved. (It should be noted that Developments now carries longer and more thoughtful pieces as Annexes from time to time.)


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As for the question as to differences of opinion, re-reading the nine issues reminds me vividly of my dissatisfaction with this aspect. The differences were not very interesting. They were not on terribly important subjects. They sometimes had a querulous or at least ill-mannered tone. They did not cumulate in a very interesting way; that is, there was no progressive refinement and sharpening of differences of opinion on a given topic over successive issues. One rejoinder promised at the end of the first issue never appeared. As the table shows, they petered out as fast or faster as did the articles.

In thinking about why it happened this way, I recall the considerable labor required in ONE to produce a useful and meaningful dissent. It takes a lot of time and exchange to set down differing views in a way that delineates clearly both the area of agreement and the area of disagreement, as well as some evidence and rationale for the latter. I believe that everybody who gets involved in the process quickly comes to feel these difficulties rather keenly, and is reluctant to get into the process in a casual, continuous fashion. At any rate, setting up a special publication and enjoining all hands to "dissent!" did not work out in this case. Perhaps another reason was that the process was in the hands of current intelligence people who are constantly required to move on from problem to problem as new material comes in and consumer interest shifts.

I will try to put my mind to the question about how one might better bring to light significant differences. My first thought is that the starting point could well be with the consumer, namely, with the designation by a consumer of a topic on which interpretations, including significant differences, were important to him. I presume we will have a chance to discuss this further.

Yours,



Attachment: Table

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<u>Date of Issue</u>	<u>CIA</u>		<u>INR</u>		<u>DIA</u>		<u>Other</u>
	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Rejoinders</u>	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Rejoinders</u>	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Rejoinders</u>	
4 Apr	3			2		1	
11 Apr	2	1	1	1			
18 Apr	2	2	2	1		1	1 {
25 Apr	3			1		1	
2 May	2		1				
9 May	-		-		-		
16 May	1	1	1				
23 May	1						1
30 May	-		-		-		1

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